

Khai Gamble  
2/23/2017  
Appropriations - DDS

Thank you to the co-chairs, Senator Osten, Senator Formica, and Representative Walker, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. I am testifying today to urge the committee to reject the \$25 million in cuts that the Governor has proposed to DDS.

My name is Khai Gamble, and I am a group home worker at Oak Hill, Sunrise, and HARC. I am also a member of SEIU 1199.

The Governor is trying to balance the budget by laying off state workers and underpaying private sector workers. This balances the budget on the backs of middle class workers and people with disabilities.

I've worked as a group home worker in the private sector for 17 years. I love the residents that I care for. I view them as my family. Beyond the physical care that myself and my co-workers provide, we also give them emotional care. I'm proud of the services that we provide.

However, the wages in this industry are too low. It's not right that after 17 years, I have to work three jobs to make ends meet. I have a daughter in college, and a 9 year-old at home. I usually work between 50 and 74 hours a week. As a healthcare worker, this is unacceptable. I deserve to be able to make a living without having to work so many hours.

No matter how tired we are, my co-workers and I always make sure to provide excellent care for our residents. Some of them notice that we are working more than one job, and will ask us why we are working so much, or when we will get to take a day off. It's painful when they ask us these questions.

There is high turnover, because many workers leave as soon as they find a better paying job, or to go back to school. This is hard for our residents, who have emotional bonds with us. The turnover causes instability for them, which we hate to see.

If the budget for DDS is cut further, we as workers will suffer, but our residents will suffer more. I'm here today to tell DDS that we need full funding for all of the services we provide. Whether in the public or private sector, all of our residents deserve to live in homes that are adequately funded and staffed. And, all of us who do this work deserve to be paid a living wage.

I ask you to work with us to help us continue to provide the care our residents deserve, and to improve the quality of our jobs. Instead of further cuts to DDS, we

need more funding. I urge you to reject the cuts requested in the Governor's budget and work with us to find a way to help us provide the best care to our families.